

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9541

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 0359

EXDIS

SANTIAGO FOR AMB MAILLIARD

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XM, OAS, AR, US

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES

1. SUMMARY. IN LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADORS HILL AND MILLIARD, FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE CUBAN PRESENCE AT BUENOS AIRES MFM WOULD BE CONSTRUCTIVE. HE SUGGESTED INSTEAD THAT FOREIGN MINISTERS HANDLE CUBAN ISSUE BY AGREEING TO FORMAL DECLARATION COMMITTING THEMSELVES TO MODIFICATION OF VOTING PROCEDURES. VIGNES INDICATED ARGENTINA WAS TRYING TO PLAY MODERATING ROLE WITH RESPECT TO NEGATIVE REACTION TO US TRADE BILL AND WOULD NOT TAKE OFFICIAL POSITION ON SUBJECT UNTIL IT HAD HAD OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY TEXT AND HEAR US SIDE. END SUMMARY

2. ALTHOUGH FONMIN VIGNES IS ON VACATION, HE YESTERDAY (JAN 14) RECEIVED AMBASSADORS HILL AND MAILLIARD, ACCOMPANIED BY EMBOFFS AND KEY FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, FOR LUNCH AT HIS RANCH SOME 200 MILES SOUTH OF BUENOS AIRES. ATMOSPHERE THROUGHOUT WAS INFORMAL AND CORDIAL. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS WHO ACCOMPANIED COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS EXTRAORDINARY HONOR, FOR THEM AS WELL AS FOR AMERICAN GUESTS, SINCE TO THEIR KNOWLEDGE VIGNES, AS FOREIGN MINISTER, HAD NEVER BEFORE RECEIVED ANYONE AT HIS RANCH.

3. AFTER PRELIMINARY PLEASANTRIES, VIGNES LED INTO SUBSTANTIVE CONVERSATION BY SAYING THERE WERE NOW TWO SERIOUS PROBLEMS TO BE
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SOLVED BEFORE MARCH MFM: A) WHAT TO DO ABOUT CUBAN ATTENDANCE,

AND B) STRONG REACTION ON PART OF SOME COUNTRIES TO WHAT THEY BELIEVED TO BE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF US TRADE BILL.

4. TURNING TO FIRST POINT, VIGNES SAID HE "PERSONALLY WAS NOW PERSUADED THAT CUBAN PRESENCE AT MARCH MFM WOULD NOT BE CONSTRUCTIVE. AT WASHINGTON MEETING LAST YEAR, HE HAD FELT INVITATION TO CUBA WOULD BE ONE OF THE MOST POSITIVE ASPECTS OF BUENOS AIRES MEETING. SINCE THEN, HOWEVER, QUITO DEBACLE AND ROA BEHAVIOR AT LIMA HAVE CHANGED PICTURE. VIGNES SAID HE BELIEVED FORMULA COULD BE FOUND TO GET AROUND INVITING CUBA. ESSENTIALLY, THIS WOULD BE BASED ON FACT THAT THERE IS NO CONSENSUS TO DO SO. VIGNES REPORTED THAT VERY RECENT SOUNDINGS INDICATE THAT BRAZIL WILL NOT RPT NOT ATTEND IF CUBA IS INVITED. ARGENTINES HAVE NOT YET TALKED TO CHILEANS BUT ARE CONFIDENT THEY WILL POSE NO PROBLEMS. ALL OTHERS APPROACHED SO FAR HAVE INDICATED INVITATION TO CUBA WOULD NOT PREVENT THEM FROM ATTENDING. PROBLEM OF VENEZUELAN AND ECUADOREAN ATTENDANCE RESULTING FROM REACTION TO TRADE BILL WAS A SEPARATE PROBLEM. (NOTE: AMBASSADOR PULIT CONFIDED PRIVATELY TO EMBOFFS THAT VIGNES' FLAT-OUT STATEMENT THAT CUBAN PRESENCE WOULD NOT BE CONSTRUCTIVE REFLECTS CHANGE OF MIND WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE DURING PAST TWO WEEKS, RESULTING FROM SOUNDINGS WHICH VIGNES HAS TAKEN DURING THAT PERIOD. BRAZILIAN REFUSAL TO ATTEND ALONG WITH CUBA DOUBTLESS GAVE VIGNES PAUSE. MOREOVER, EVEN A NUMBER OF THOSE WHO SAID THEY WOULD COME EVEN IF CUBA INVITED SHOWED MARKED LACK OF ENTHUSIASM.)

5. AMBASSADORS HILL AND MAILLIARD SAID THAT, AS FONMIN VIGNES KNEW, SECRETARY KISSINGER ALSO HAD DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER CUBAN PRESENCE WOULD BE CONSTRUCTIVE. SECRETARY KISSINGER WAS NOT, HOWEVER, IN ANY WAY ATTEMPTING TO IMPOSE HIS OWN DOUBTS ON OTHERS. WERE THERE A CONSENSUS IN FAVOR OF CUBAN ATTENDANCE, HE WOULD BE WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH IT.

6. VIGNES NOTED THAT WHILE WAY COULD PROBABLY BE FOUND TO GET AROUND INVITATION TO CUBA, EXPECTATIONS HAD ALREADY BUILT UP. MANY EXPECT CUBA TO BE INVITED AND WILL BE CRITICAL WHEN IT IS NOT. CLEARLY, UNLESS MFM FACED UP TO CUBAN ISSUE IN SOME WAY, CONFERENCE WOULD BE CONSIDERED A FAILURE. VIGNES SUGGESTED THAT ONE WAY TO HANDLE PROBLEM WOULD BE TO HAVE MFM ISSUE FORMAL DECLARATION SAYING A) THAT FOREIGN MINISTERS IN AGREEMENT THAT
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RIO TREATY VOTING PROCEDURES SHOULD BE CHANGED SO THAT MEASURES COULD BE RESCINDED BY MAJORITY VOTE, AND B) THAT EACH GOVT WOULD INSTRUCT ITS REPRESENTATIVE TO NEXT OAS MEETING TO RAISE AND VOTE FOR SUCH MODIFICATIONS. VIGNES NOTED THAT WHILE GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT VOTING PROCEDURES SHOULD BE CHANGED ALREADY ACHIEVED, A FORMAL DECLARATION IN WHICH SIGNATORIES COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO MAKING CHANGES AT NEXT MEETING OF OAS WOULD BE SEEN AS CONCRETE STEP FORWARD. FURTHER, IT WOULD BE PERCEIVED THAT THIS OPENED WAY

TO LIFTING CUBAN SANCTIONS. IT COULD NOT, THEN, BE SAID THAT MFM HAD FAILED TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH CUBAN ISSUE. AMBASSADOR PULIT ADDED CAVEAT THAT WORDING OF MFM DECLARATION HAD TO GO BEYOND CESI FORMULATION IN ORDER TO SHOW MOVEMENT.

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EXDIS

SANTIAGO FOR AMB MAILLIARD

7. VIGNES CONCLUDED BY SAYING IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO HAVE PRIOR AGREEMENT TO SUCH A DECLARATION OF INTENT BEFORE GOA OFFICIALLY ADVISED CUBANS THAT THEY WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE INVITED. DECLARATION WOULD PROVIDE GOA WITH LEGAL AGREEMENT TO USE WITH CUBANS AND OTHERS REGARDING NONINVITATION.

8. AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD POINTED OUT SEVERAL PROBLEMS IMPLICIT IN THE PROPOSAL--SUCH AS THE FACT THAT A FEW OF THE COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT BUENOS AIRES MFM EITHER ARE NOT MEMBERS OF OAS OR ARE NOT SIGNATORIES TO RIO TREATY. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THESE DID NOT SEEM INSURMOUNTABLE. AMBASSADOR HILL ASKED ABOUT MODALITIES FOR ACHIEVING PRIOR AGREEMENT MENTIONED BY VIGNES.

9. AMBASSADOR PULIT SAID MODALITIES NOT YET WORKED OUT, AND SUGGESTED THAT HE DISCUSS MATTER IN GREATER DETAIL WITH EMBOFFS DURING NEXT FEW DAYS. US SIDE AGREED.

10. TURNING TO SECOND PROBLEM, VIGNES ASKED AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD HOW HE SAW OUTCOME OF US EFFORTS IN OAS TO CLARIFY TRADE BILL. LETTER RESPONDED THAT AS OF TIME HE LEFT WASHINGTON, SEVERAL AVENUES WERE BEING EXPLORED. SECRETARY KISSINGER WAS EVEN NOW

MEETING WITH LA AMBASSADORS IN EFFORT TO PUT MATTER IN PERSPECTIVE. IT WAS UNFORTUNATE, HE NOTED, THAT SOME COUNTRIES HAD REACTED SO PUBLICLY AND VIOLENTLY BEFORE ANYONE HAD EVEN HAD A CHANCE TO READ AND ANALYZE THE TRADE BILL.

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11. VIGNES AGREED AND SAID HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS OWN PEOPLE TO DRAW NO CONCLUSIONS UNTIL THEY HAD HAD OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY TEXT OF BILL AND HEAR USG INTERPRETATION OF HOW IT WILL WORK. HE HAD ALSO TALKED TO ANUMBER OF OTHER FOREIGN MINISTERS DURING PAST FEW DAYS IN EFFORT TO EXERCISE MODERATING INFLUENCE. HE HOPED HE HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL. HE SAID THERE NO DOUBT IN HIS MIND THAT PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD BEEN SINCERE IN WANTING TRADE BILL WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL TO LDCS. IT UNFORTUNATE THAT INITIAL REACTION HAD BEEN SO CONTRARY TO WHAT WAS EXPECTED. VIGNES NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT LAS HAD WAITED A LONG TIME FOR A BILL WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL TO THEM. IF, AFTER ANALYSIS, TRADE BILL PROVED TO HAVE DAMAGING CLAUSES THAT WOULD BE VERY BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW.

12. AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD EXPLAINED THAT SOME UNFORTUNATE COMIHOMISES AND AMENDMENTS MIGHT HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED IN LAST-MINUTE EFFORT TO GET THE BILL THROUGH--ON THEORY THAT IT BETTER TO HAVE SOME BILL (WHICH COULD ALWAYS BE MODIFIED AND IMPROVED) THAN NONE AT ALL. HE NOTED, MOREOVER, THAT SO FAR ONLY THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS HAVE BEEN EMPHASIZED. IN FACT, HOWEVER, HE WAS CERTAIN THAT WHEN BILL WAS STUDIED IT WOULD BE SEEN THAT POSITIVE ASPECTS FAR OUTWEIGHED THE NEGATIVE.

13. AMBASSADOR HILL INDICATED THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER WAS PREPARED TO MAKE CONCERTED EFFORT TO HAVE CONGRESS REMOVE ANY INEQUITIES FROM THE TRADE BILL, IF HE CONVINCED THIS NECESSARY AND COULD BE USEFUL. HE ASKED FOR VIGNES' VIEWS AS TO WHETHER IT WOULD BE TACTICALLY BETTER TO PRESENT NECESSARY AMENDMENTS TO CONGRESS BEFORE OR AFTER SECRETARY'S FEBRUARY TRIP. VIGNES REPLIED THAT WHILE, OF COURSE, ANALYSIS AND CLARIFICATIONS OF BILL WOULD HAVE TO COME WELL BEFORE FEBRUARY TRIP, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF AMENDMENTS WERE PRESENTED IN WAKE OF FEBRUARY VISIT, SINCE THIS WOULD CREATE AURA OF POSITIVE CONSULTATIONS AND ONWARD MOVEMENT TOWARD MFM. VIGNES ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT AMENDMENTS BE PRESENTED BEFORE MARCH MFM, ELSE ATMOSPHERE THERE WOULD NOT BE CONDUCIVE TO POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS.

14. VIGNES AGREED WITH SUGGESTION OF AMBS. HILL AND MAILLIARD THAT IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL IF USG COULD SEND EXPERT ASAP TO EXPLAIN TRADE BILL TO GOA. HE EMPHASIZED THAT IT VITAL THAT IN THIS AND

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OTHER EFFORTS EMPHASIS BE PLACED NOT ON TELLING LAS WHY IT HAD BEEN NECESSARY TO INCLUDE DAMAGING FEATURES OF THE BILL; RATHER, EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON TELLING LAS HOW BILL WOULD BE USED TO HELP THEM.

15. AMBASSADOR HILL STATED THAT US WAS VERY INTERESTED IN SEEING FORWARD MOVEMENT ON MATTER OF TRANSFER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND HAD HOPED THAT SOMETHING WOULD BE READY BY TIME OF MARCH MFM. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, NOT MUCH PROGRESS SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN MADE AT SANTIAGO MEETING. VIGNES AGREED THAT THIS WAS, INDEED, A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE, BUT EXPRESSED OPINION THAT IT SHOULD NOT DEFLECT US FROM OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS ON MFM AGENDA SUCH AS CUBAN ISSUE. HE NOTED THAT BEFORE ANYTHING COULD BE DONE ON TRANSFER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, GOVERNMENTS HAD TO DECIDE EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS THEY WISHED TO ACHIEVE, AND HE DID NOT BELIEVE THIS STEP HAD YET BEEN TAKEN.

16. VIGNES TOLD AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD THAT HE REJECTED THE LDEVANO PROPOSAL AS GOING FURTHER THAN NECESSARY AND AS TOO LIKELY TO PRODUCE ARGUMENT.

17. VIGNES SHOWED NO INTEREST IN THE IDEA OF A COMPLETE RIO TREATY PROTOCOL FOR SIGNATURE AT THE MARCH MFM.

18. VIGNES CONCLUDED CONVERSATION BY ASKING THAT HIS FONDEST REGARDS BE TRANSMITTED TO HIS FRIEND SECRETARY KISSINGER, WHOSE VISIT HE ANTICIPATES WITH MUCH PLEASURE.

19. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO VIGNES' SUGGESTION REGARDING A FORMAL DECLARATION OF INTENT TO CHANGE VOTING PROCEDURES. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM MEETING ON A NUMBER OF OTHER MATTERS WILL BE FORTHCOMING SOONEST.
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